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August 21, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Subject: Berlin Political Planning

I want to take a stronger lead on Berlin negotiations. Both the calendar of negotiation and the substance of the Western position remain unsettled, and I no longer believe that satisfactory progress can be made by Four-Power discussion alone. I think we should promptly work toward a strong U. S. position in both areas and should make it clear that we cannot accept a veto from any other power. We should of course be as persuasive and diplomatic as possible, but it is time to act. My initial views on both subjects are set out below.

1. The Calendar

I like your plan to issue, before September first, an invitation to negotiations. I think this means that we should this week make it plain to our three Allies that this is what we mean to do and that they must come along or stay behind. I shall be glad to write to General de Gaulle myself if desirable.

I also like your idea that the four Foreign Ministers, at New York for the United Nations, should be empowered to work out a place and time for negotiations. If there is a better way, I'd be glad to accept it. In general, I like the idea of an announcement before September first, discussion of ways and means before October first, and formal negotiation about November first.

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U.S. ARCHIVIST (111-78-669)	
By <i>hjm</i>	NARS, Date 11/7/83

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Within the category of "discussion of ways and means," I place the possibility of preliminary private talks between appropriate US-USSR diplomats. I like Chip Bohlen for this, on our side. Obviously such talks would have to be based on a clear and solid sense of our policy, and so I do not think they can begin for about a month -- say around September 25th.

I do not think well of the plans for a three-Ambassador call upon Khrushchev to try to smoke him out. Until we have something to suggest ourselves, we shall not get any more out of him than we have been getting since Vienna.

2. The Substance of Our Policy

The Acheson paper is a good start, but it is not a finishing point. What you and I need is a small group of hard workers who can produce alternatives for our comment and criticism on an urgent basis. This, in my judgment, should be a labor separated from the day-to-day operational work and planning under Kohler. I think of such people as Bohlen, Owen and Hillenbrand from State and Bundy and Sorensen over here. Maybe there should be fewer; probably there should not be more. This group should be as nearly invisible as possible, and it should report directly to you and me. Most of the elements of a firm policy are standing around now -- and I believe a group with orders from the two of us could prepare a clear paper for my decision in one long session on August 31st. We shall need a paper by that time if we are to talk with our allies and get something like an agreed position from them by the end of September. I would suggest that such a group bring in preliminary proposals on Friday of this week -- August twenty-fifth.

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In general, what I think we should say to such a small group as guidelines is this:

1. Make the framework of our proposals as fresh as possible -- they should not look like warmed-over stuff from 1959.

2. Protect our support for the idea of self-determination, the idea of all-Germany, and the fact of viable, protected freedom in West Berlin.

3. Do not insist on maintenance of occupation rights if other strong guarantees can be designed. Occupation rights are a less attractive base, before the world, than the freedom and the protection of West Berliners.

4. Consider well the option of proposing parallel peace treaties. If we table our own drafts, we might do a lot with this; and Khrushchev would have to look at what we say, because he has invited just this course.

5. Examine all of Khrushchev's statements for pegs on which to hang our position. He has thrown out quite a few assurances and hints here and there, and I believe they should be exploited.

6. Do not put too much distance between our initial proposals and our fall-back position. Indeed it may be well not to have any fall-back position. Our first presentation should be, in itself, as persuasive and reasonable as possible.

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Can I have your prompt reaction to this?